

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 02765 01 OF 02 052308Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6979
WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 2765

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY) BR, US
SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: THE PUBLIC VIEW

USIS (ICA) MEDIA REACTION CABLES HAVE REPORTED PRESS
COVERAGE OF AND COMMENTARY ON THE PRESIDENT'S MARCH 29-31
VISIT TO BRAZIL IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL. THIS MESSAGE IS
ESSENTIALLY A DISTILLATION OF THAT COVERAGE AND COMMENTARY
AND VIEWS THE VISIT AS PERCEIVED BY BRAZIL'S READING PUBLIC.

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PAGE 02 BRASIL 02765 01 OF 02 052308Z

1. SUMMARY. HAVING TAPPED ITS SOURCES IN THE GOB, THE
DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND ELSEWHERE (ALTHOUGH MINIMALLY IN THE
EMBASSY), BRAZIL'S WRITTEN MEDIA--PRESS AND NEWSMAGAZINES--
HAVE CONCLUDED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT CONSTITUTED A CLEAR
PLUS FOR GOB POLICY AND FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS,
BUT THERE IS SOME UNCERTAINTY AS TO ITS ULTIMATE SIGNIFICANCE
FOR BRAZIL-US RELATIONS. THE CONSENSUS IS SUMMED UP IN THREE

LOCAL HEADLINES: (A) "JIMMY CARTER DOESN'T BITE" (B) "PRESIDENTS AGREE TO DISAGREE", AND (C) "CARTER LEAVES, PROBLEMS REMAIN". THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN MINIMAL PUBLIC COMMENT BY GOB OFFICIALS OR RANKING MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. "JIMMY CARTER DOESN'T BITE." PRE-VISIT MEDIA COMMENTARY WAS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY APPREHENSION COMMUNICATED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY (ITAMARATY) AND (PRESUMABLY) PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (PLANALTO) SOURCES THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS COMING TO HAMMER HOME THE CONFRONTATIONAL THEMES OF HIS NUCLEAR AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. THE PRESS CAUTIONED THAT ALTHOUGH THE USG APPEARED TO HAVE CHANGED ITS TACTICS, I.E., HAD STOPPED BEING CONFRONTATIONAL, BOTH SIDES SEEMED INTRACTABLY WEDDED TO THEIR POSITIONS ON KEY DIVISIVE ISSUES WITH NO RESOLUTION IN SIGHT. THIS ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE CASE WAS REINFORCED THE WEEK BEFORE THE VISIT BY FOREIGN MINISTER SILVEIRA'S ADVISORY TO THE PRESS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD, IN EFFECT, INVITED HIMSELF TO BRAZIL AND THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN SPECIFICALLY INVITED BY THE GOB (BRASILIA 2347). THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY HERE IS STILL PUZZLING OVER THIS--ITS MOST CHARITABLE INTERPRETATION BEING THAT SILVEIRA WAS, AT THE LEAST, UNGRACIOUS. IT WOULD APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT IN THIS AND OTHER (LESSER) COMMENTS THE MINISTER MAY IN FACT HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO PREPARE PUBLIC OPINION FOR A CONFRONTATIONAL VISIT.

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 02765 01 OF 02 052308Z

3. THE PRESIDENT'S FRIENDLY DEMEANOR UPON LANDING IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO DISPEL THESE APPREHENSIONS. HIS ARRIVAL STATEMENTS WITH ITS CLEAR RECOGNITION OF BRAZIL'S ROLE AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, SET THE TONE FOR PRESS COMMENTARY THROUGHOUT THE VISIT AND PROVIDED A BENCHMARK AGAINST WHICH TO MEASURE ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS. ACCORDING TO JORNAL DO BRASIL'S BRASILIA BUREAU CHIEF, THE GOB WAS UNPREPARED FOR THIS AND FOR THE SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES TO THE POINT THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD NOT BRIEFED GEISEL ON SUCH ISSUES EXCEPT IN BROAD, GENERAL TERMS.

4. ACCORDING TO MOST COMMENTATORS, THIS VERY SUCCESSFUL STROKING OF THE GOB'S COLLECTIVE EGO CREATED A STATE OF "EUPHORIA" IN ITAMARATY AND PLANALTO. IT ALSO HAD AN EFFECT UNEXPECTED EVEN BY THE US SIDE: THE DISCOVERY BY THE GOB THAT BRAZIL DOES IN FACT HAVE THE "SPECIFIC GRAVITY" IN WORLD AFFAIRS THAT SILVEIRA HAS LONG BEEN SAYING IT DOES, I.E., IT MUST BE TRUE BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES SAYS IT IS. THE GOB'S SENSE OF RELIEF WAS NOT TOTAL, HOWEVER, UNTIL AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE THE MORNING OF MARCH 30. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, HIS BEHAVIOR AT THAT EVENT WAS CONSIDERED THE MAKE OR BREAK POINT OF THE VISIT.

THERE WERE STORIES UP THE NIGHT BEFORE, PUROPORTEDLY BASED

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 02765 02 OF 02 052328Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 2765

ON GOB BACKGROUNDERS, TO THE EFFECT THAT CONFRONTATIONAL
REMARKS OR ATTITUDES AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE WOULD POISON THE
SECOND BILATERAL AND PREVENT THE ISSUANCE OF A COMMUNIQUE.
INSTEAD, AS THE PRESS CAREFULLY NOTED, PRESIDENT CARTER MET THE
ISSUES HEAD ON IN NON-CONFRONTATIONAL FASHION, THUS PERMITTING THE
VISIT TO PROVEED TO ITS SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION.

5. "PRESIDENTS AGREE TO DISAGREE." THERE IS A GENERAL
MEDIA CONSENSUS THAT THE PRINCIPAL PARACTICAL EFFECT OF THE
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PAGE 02 BRASIL 02765 02 OF 02 052328Z

VISIT WAS THE "SUPPRESSION OF THE EMOTIONALISM THAT HAD (EARLIER) CHARACTERIZED US-BRAZIL RELATIONS". THIS WAS DUE IN LARGE MEASURE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, TO THE FACT THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS GAINED EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HAS LEARNED THAT THE "REALITIES" OF INTERNATIONAL SITUATIONS ARE "SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN UNIVERSITY TEXTS". THUS, THERE HAS ALLEGEDLY BEEN A MATURATION OF THE US APPROACH RATHER THAN AN ACCOMMODATION OF INTERESTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IN ANY EVENT, THE RESULTANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF OUR RELATIONS, THE MEDIA BELIEVES, WILL NOW PERMIT SOBER AND PRAGMATIC ADDRESS TO ISSUES OUTSTANDING BETWEEN US. CREDIT FOR SUCH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE CLIMATE IS ATTRIBUTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO PRESIDENT CARTER. HIS OPEN RECOGNITION OF BRAZIL'S INTERNATIONAL STATUS, THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE MANY AREAS IN WHICH OUR INTERESTS CONVERGE (AS SPECIFIED IN THE JOINT PRESS COMMUNIQUE), AND THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE IN MEETING GENERAL FIGUEIREDO, ARE INTERPRETED AS HAVING CREATED THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACE--AND OF HAVING LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR--FUTURE AGREEMENTS OF SUBSTANCE IN A TIME FRAME THAT TRANSCENDS THE GEISEL ADMINISTRATION (WHICH ENDS NEXT MARCH).

6. "CARTER LEAVES, PROBLEMS REMAIN". THIS IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE, HOWEVER, IS NOT INTERPRETED AS FORESHADOWING EASY RESOLUTION OF THE PRINCIPAL ISSUES IN OUR RELATIONS, I.E. IN NUCLEAR, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SOME TRADE QUESTIONS. THESE, THE PRESS IS AGREED, REMAIN. THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION, THOUGH, IS THAT THE VISIT RESULTED IN "NEITHER WINNERS NOR LOSERS, BUT A TIE". WHETHER THIS CONCLUSION IS SHARED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GOB WE DO NOT YET KNOW. THE ONLY HIGH LEVEL PUBLIC COMMENTARY REPORTED SO FAR HAS COME FROM SILVEIRA, WHO CALLED THE VISIT "VERY PRODUCTIVE" BUT NOTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 02765 02 OF 02 052328Z

CONTINUING DIFFERENCES ON THE NUCLEAR QUESTION, AND FINANCE MINISTER SIMONSEN, WHO TERMED THE VISIT "VERY GOOD" FROM A POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW BUT NOTED THAT ECONOMIC MATTERS HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED BY THE PRESIDENTS.

7. WHILE THE PRSS HAS GIVEN PRESIDENT CARTER THE LION'S SHARE OF THE CREDIT FOR IMPROVING THE OFFICIAL ATMOSPHERE OF US-BRAZIL RELATIONS IT HAS HAD LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT WHAT IT BELIEVES HE HIMSELF MAY HAVE DERIVED FROM THE VISIT. THE ONLY OCCASION ON WHICH IT CAME CLOSE WAS IN COVERAGE OF HIS MEETING WITH SIX DISTINGUISHED BRAZILIANS IN RIO ON MARCH 31. EVEN THIS WAS (UNDERSTANDABLY) VIEWED PRIMARILY THROUGH THE TOPIC OF BRAZIL-US RELATIONS. WHILE THE PRESIDENT WAS

INDIRECTLY GIVEN CREDIT FOR HAVING INVITED THE GROUP TO MEET WITH HIM, AND THUS HAVING PROVIDED HIMSELF WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN A NON-OFFICIAL VIEW OF THE BRAZILIAN SITUATION, THE MEETINGS' RESULTS WERE INTERPRETED AS ANOTHER PLUS FOR THE GOB AND OUR RELATIONSHIP. THE PRESIDENT'S UNEXPECTED RIDE WITH CARDINAL ARNS TO THE AIRPORT CAUSED NO DRAMATIC REACTION AND WAS, IN FACT, OVERSHADOWED BY THE GENERAL PRESS INTERPRETATION THAT THE MEETING HAD "TURNED OUT WELL--FOR GEISEL". THIS BECAUSE OF THE FAVORABLE REMARKS EACH OF THE PARTICIPANTS LATER REPORTED THEY HAD MADE TO PRESIDENT CARTER ABOUT GEISEL'S POLICY OF GRADUAL LIBERALIZATION.

8. PUBLIC POLITICAL COMMENTARY HAS ALSO BEEN VERY SPARSE, PARTLY BECAUSE LAST WEEK AND THIS HAVE BEEN VERY POLITICAL WEEKS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE (A) ARENA HAS BEEN CAUTIONSLY WAITING FOR A PRESIDENTIAL LEAD, WHICH HAS NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING, AND (B) ELEMENTS OF THE MDB, WHICH AS A PARTY WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE VISIT, HAVE BEEN SIMILARLY CAUTIOUS AND FOCUSED THEIR FEW COMMENTS ON THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO CONGRESS, WHICH THEY PRAISED.

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